A METHOD FOR TREATING HERPES VIRUSES

CROSS REFERENCE

This application claims the benefit of the following provisional applications: U.S. Serial No: 60/218,118, filed July 13, 2000; Serial No: 60/283,880, filed April 13, 2001 under 35 USC 119(e)(i).

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method for selecting an anti-herpes viral compound and a method for selectively inhibiting herpes viruses in a human host in need of such treatment.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The herpesviruses comprise a large family of double stranded DNA viruses. Eight of the herpes viruses, herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2 (HSV-1 and HSV-2), varicella zoster virus (VZV), human cytomegalovirus (HCMV), Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), and human herpes viruses 6, 7, and 8 (HHV-6, HHV-7, and HHV-8), have been shown to infect humans. Several of these viruses are important human pathogens.

HSV-1 is estimated to affect 100 million people in the U.S. Primary infection of HSV-1 usually occurs between the ages of one and four. Cold sores, the visible symptom, typically appear at a later age, with 20-45% of the population over the age of fifteen affected (Whitley, Clin. Intect. Dis., 26:541-555, 1998).

Genital herpes (HSV-2) is the second most common sexually transmitted disease, with approximately 22% of the U.S population infected with this virus (Fleming 1997).

VZV is the causative agent of chicken pox upon primary infection and can recur in adults as zoster.

EBV results in approximately two million cases of infectious mononucleosis in the U.S. each year. It can also cause lymphomas in immunocompromised patients and has been associated with Burkitt's lymphoma, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, and Hodgkins disease.

Infection with HCMV often occurs during childhood and is typically asymptomatic except in immunocompriomised patients where it causes significant morbidity and mortality.

HHV-6 is the causitive agent of roseola and may be associated with multiple sclerosis and chronic fatigue syndrome. HHV-7 disease association is unclear, but it may be

involved in some cases of roseola. HHV-8 has been associated with Karposi's sarcoma, body cavity based lymphomas, and multiple myeloma.

These viruses are capable of residing in a latent state within the host. Reactivation of latent virus results from response to environmental stimuli (ex. UV exposure, stress, etc.). Infections or recurrence can be life threatening in immunocompromised patients such as AIDS or transplant patients where HCMV can result in retinitis, pneumonia, and gastrointestinal disease.

The increased immunocompromised population has created an unmet medical need for antivirals against herpesviruses because current therapies do not have a sufficiently broad spectrum against this family of viruses and/or they have limited utility due to toxicity. The present invention provides a method for selectively inhibiting herpesviruses DNA polymerase with compounds that have broad spectrum activity. The method offers a distinct advantage in the treatment of patients in need, particularly immunocompromised patients at risk of infection or reactivation by many members of the herpesvirus family.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a method of selecting compounds that inhibit herpes viruses comprising:

a) measuring IC_{50} of a compound of interest that inhibits a wild type herpes virus,

b) measuring IC_{50} of the same compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant herpes virus which is the same strain of the wild type herpes virus,

c) comparing IC_{50} of step a with IC_{50} of step b; and

d) selecting the compound of interest wherein the IC_{50} of step b is at least 3 times greater than the IC_{50} of step a.

In above method, the order of step a and step b are interchangeable.

The present invention further provides a method of selecting compounds that inhibit herpes viruses comprising:

a) measuring IC_{50} of a compound of interest that inhibits a wild type HSV-1,

b) measuring IC_{50} of the same compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant HSV-1 which is the same strain of the wild type herpes virus,

c) comparing IC_{50} of step a with IC_{50} of step b; and

d) selecting the compound of interest wherein the IC_{50} of step b is at least 3 times greater than the IC_{50} of step a.

In above method, the order of step a and step b are interchangeable.

The present invention further provides a method of selecting compounds that inhibit herpes viruses comprising:

a) measuring IC_{50} of a compound of interest that inhibits a wild type HSV-2,

b) measuring IC_{50} of the same compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant HSV-2 which is the same strain of the wild type herpes virus,

c) comparing IC_{50} of step a with IC_{50} of step b; and

d) selecting the compound of interest wherein the IC_{50} of step b is at least 3 times greater than the IC_{50} of step a.

In above method, the order of step a and step b are interchangeable.

The present invention further provides a method of selecting compounds that inhibit herpes viruses comprising:

a) measuring IC_{50} of a compound of interest that inhibits a wild type HCMV,

b) measuring IC_{50} of the same compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant HCMV which is the same strain of the wild type herpes virus,

c) comparing IC_{50} of step a with IC_{50} of step b; and

d) selecting the compound of interest wherein the IC_{50} of step b is at least 3 times greater than the IC_{50} of step a.

In above method, the order of step a and step b are interchangeable.

The present invention further provides a method for selectively treating diseases caused by herpes viruses in a human host comprising administering a compound to a human in need of such treatment wherein said compound inhibits herpes viruses by interaction with the binding domain in the viral DNA polymerase.

The present invention further provides method for selectively inhibiting herpes viruses in a human host comprising administering a compound to a human in need of such treatment wherein IC_{50} of the compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant herpes virus is at lease 3 times greater than IC_{50} of the compound that inhibits a wild type herpes virus which is the same strain as the mutant herpes virus.

The present invention further provides a compound for treating herpesviral infections in a human host wherein IC_{50} of the compound that inhibits a binding domain mutant herpes virus is at lease 5 times greater than IC_{50} of the compound that inhibits a wild type herpes virus which is the same strain as the mutant herpes virus.

The present invention further provides a compound for treating herpesviral infections in a human host wherein said compound inhibits the herpesvirus by interacting with the binding domain in the viral DNA polymerase.

The present invention further provides a compound for the inhibiting of herpesvirus DNA polymerases wherein serial passage of a wild type herpes virus in the presence of said compound results in a change of the wild type HSV-1 polymerase at amino acid 823 from valine to alanine.

The present invention further provides a compound for inhibiting herpesvirus DNA polymerases wherein serial passage of a wild type herpes virus in the presence of said compound results a change of the wild type HCMV polymerase at amino acid 823 from valine to alanine and at amino acid 824 from valine to leucine.

The present invention further provides a mutant herpesvirus DNA molecule having a nucleotide sequence selected from a group consisting of SEQ.ID.NO. 1; SEQ.ID.NO. 3; SEQ.ID.NO. 5; SEQ.ID.NO. 7; SEQ.ID.NO. 9; and SEQ.ID.NO. 11.

The present invention further provides a mutant herpesvirus polymerase amino acid molecule having an amino acid sequence selected from a group consisting of SEQ.ID.NO. 2; SEQ.ID.NO. 4; SEQ.ID.NO. 6; SEQ.ID.NO. 8; SEQ.ID.NO. 10 and SEQ.ID.NO. 12.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 – examples of 4-oxo-DHQ and 4-oxo-DHTP compounds.

Figure 2 – Herpesvirus' polymerases amino acid conserved region.

Figure 3 – Recovered virus after serial passage of HSV-1 in presence of 20 μM of compound No. **17**.

Figure 4 – Comparision of Wild HSV-1 and HSV-2 herpesvirus DNA polymerase amino acid sequences alligned by amino acid homology. (Seq. No: 14-19)

Figure 5 – Mutant Herpes Virus DNA and amino acid sequence list. (Seq. No: 1-12)

Figure 6 – Wild HCMV herpesvirus DNA polymerases amino acid sequence. (Seq. No 13)

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

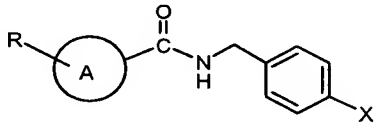
A key enzyme in the replication of all herpesviruses is the virus-coded DNA polymerase. Most of the currently available anti-herpes drugs target the viral DNA polymerase. Drugs such as Foscarnet acts by direct inhibition of the viral polymerase. These

drugs are non-nucleoside inhibitors of herpesvirus DNA polymerases. Others such as the nucleoside analogs, Acyclovir, Penciclovir and Ganciclovir must first be phosphorylated to the monophosphate forms by virus encoded kinases and, further phosphorylated to triphosphate by cellular enzymes before they are active inhibitors. The triphosphate forms of these nucleoside analogs inhibit polymerases by competing with the binding of natural triphosphates and their subsequent insertion into growing DNA strands. These drugs are known as nucleoside inhibitors of herpesvirus DNA polymerases.

One of the limitations of the currently available drugs is that they are active against only a few of the eight human herpesviruses. For example, Acyclovir and Penciclovir inhibit HSV and VZV replication but have poor activity against CMV.

In order to identify antiviral compounds that would have the potential to inhibit replication of most of the human herpesviruses, compounds are *in vitro* screened for inhibitors of herpesvirus DNA polymerase activity. Because portions of the amino acid sequence of the polymerases are highly conserved within the herpesvirus family it is possible to discover small molecules that inhibit herpesvirus polymerases but not cellular DNA polymerases. Using this biochemical approach, several new classes of compounds such as the 4-hydroxyquinoline derivatives (4-HQ), 4-oxo-dihydroquinoline derivatives (4-oxo-DHQ) and 4-oxo-dihydrothienopyridine derivatives (4-oxo-DHTP) were discovered as potent, non-nucleoside herpesvirus DNA polymerase inhibitors. *In vitro* polymerase assays and/or *in vivo* cell culture assays have demonstrated that these compounds inhibit HSV-1, HSV-2, HCMV, VZV, EBV, and HHV-8 replication.

4-Oxo-DHQ and 4-oxo-DHTP are derivatives of formula I



I

wherein ring A is a saturated or unsaturated fused double or triple heterocyclic ring having 1, 2, 3 or 4 heteroatoms selected from group consisting of oxygen, sulfur, or nitrogen; and wherein R and X are the appropriated substitutents, respectively.

Examples of 4-HQ compounds, 4-oxo-DHQ compounds and 4-oxo-DHTP compounds are illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Antiviral activity of these examples are shown in Table 1 below. As shown in Table 1, these compounds inhibit HSV-1 and HSV-2 as well or better than the current commercially available drug Acyclovir.

Table 1

Antiviral Activity of 4-oxo DHQ/4-oxo DTHP Against HSV-1 and HSV-2

	Compound IC_{50} (uM)					
virus	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**ACV**
HSV-1 KOS	2.0	3.8	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.6
HSV-1 F	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.6	1.3
HSV-1 DJL	2.5	2.6	1.8	2.2	2.7	1.8
HSV-1 Patton	ND	5.3	7.7	4.3	10	9.3
HSV-2 MS	2.0	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.5	10
HSV-2 35D	ND	5.4	5.0	3.2	8.1	6.0
HSV-2 186	2.0	2.3	3.2	2.3	4.2	>10

It has also been discovered that point mutations within the HSV-1 polymerase gene that confer resistance to Acyclovir and other nucleoside analogs do not result in resistance to the 4-HQ, 4-oxo-DHQs or 4-oxo-DHTPs. Serial passage of wild type HSV-1 in the presence of 4-oxo-DHQ results in the isolation of mutants that are highly resistant (>20 fold increase in the IC_{50}) to these compounds while retaining sensitivity to nucleoside inhibitors such as Acyclovir.

In order to determine the mechanism of action of 4-HQ, 4-oxo-DHQ and 4-oxo-DHTP compounds against herpes viruses, mutants resistant to these compounds are isolated by serial passage of the virus in the presence of a 4-oxo-DHQ compound. Sequencing analysis of HSV-1 and HSV-2 strains resistant to the 4-oxo-DHQ identifies that HSV-1 (KOS strain) polymerase protein and its homologous HSV-2 have a conserved region (a binding domain), which is a critical contact point for these compounds. While amino acid numbering of the DNA polymerase may vary between strains of HSV-1 and HSV-2, this binding domain encompassing the HSV-1 (KOS) strain amino acid 823 is highly conserved in herpesviruses and can be identified by alligning the homologous amino acids of this domain as shown in Fig 2.

In HSV-1 and HSV-2 strains resistant to the 4-oxo-DHQ and similar compounds, a change of valine to an alanine at the binding domain provides full resistance.

In the HSV-1 DNA polymerase, resistance is also found when a valine changes to methionine at amino acid 823 but only when accompanied by a second amino acid change.

Isolation of HCMV resistant to 4-oxo-DHQ's is found to be very difficult. Comparison of the amino acid sequence of the HSV polymerase (Y-G-F-T-G-V-Q-H-G) and HCMV polymerase (Y-G-F-T-G-V-V-N-G) in the region of amino acid 823 (underlined amino acid) shows that there is a second valine at position 824 in the HCMV polymerase. In vitro assay using mutant HCMV polymerases demonstrates that full resistance to the 4-oxo-DHQs requires changes at both amino acids 823 (a valine to alanine) and 824 (a valine to leucine). A HCMV polymerase gene containing V823A and V824L mutations is used in marker rescue experiments to generate a viral mutant. This mutant has an IC_{50} approximately 7-fold above that of wild-type HCMV.

The HSV-1, HSV-2 and HCMV mutants are also found to be resistant to other non-nucleoside inhibitors such as the 4-oxo-DHTP and similar compounds. However, when the binding domain mutants (e. g. HSV-1 V823A, HSV-2-MS V826A, HSV-2-186 V828A, and HCMV V823A/V824L mutants) are tested in plaque reduction assays against a series of nucleoside polymerase inhibitors and the non-nucleoside inhibitor such as Foscarnet, replication of the mutants is found to be inhibited by all of the currently marketed anti-herpes polymerase inhibitors tested.

These studies demonstrate that certain non-nucleosides like 4-HQ, 4-oxo-DHQ and 4-oxo-DHTP compounds bind to a different site on the herpes polymerase than the nucleoside inhibitors and Foscarnet. The valine at the binding domain is conserved in the DNA polymerases of six of the eight human herpesviruses and several animal herpesviruses, and appears to play a critical role in the antiviral activity of the 4-HQ, 4-oxo-DHQ and 4-oxo-DHTP compounds. (See **Figure 2**)

Since mutation at the binding domain negates these non-nucleoside inhibitors' activities, compounds could be tested against wild type polymerases and the mutant polymerases to establish the probability of similar binding. We refer to this property of compounds as interaction with the binding domain. Since compounds that interact with the binding domain have exhibited broad-spectrum activity against herpesviruses, this invention provides a method for selecting compounds to treat individuals such as immunocompromised patients who are afflicted with multple herpesvirus infections.

Definitions

The term " wild-type" refers to a gene or gene product which has the characteristics of that gene or gene product when isolated from a naturally occurring source. A wild-type

gene is that which is most frequently observed in a population and is thus arbitrarily designated the "normal" or " wild-type" form of the gene.

In contrast, the term "mutant" refers to a gene or gene product which displays modifications in sequence and or functional properties (i.e., altered characteristics) when compared to the wild-type gene or gene product. It is noted that naturally-occurring mutants can be isolated; these are identified by the fact that they have altered characteristics when compared to the wild-type gene or gene product.

IC_{50} refers to concentration of a drug that inhibits virus growth by 50%.

Wild type HSV-1 and HSV-2 strains are listed in **Figure 4**.

Wild type HCMV is listed in SEQ. ID. NO.13.

The term "Iudr" refers to antiviral drug Iododeoxyuridine.

The term "Bvdu" refers to antiviral drug Bromovinyldeoxyuridine.

The term "ACV" refers to antiviral drug Acyclovir.

The term "AraC" refers to antiviral drug Arabinosylcytidine.

The term "AraT" refers to antiviral drug Arabinosylthymine.

The term "AraA" refers to antiviral drug Arabinosyladenine.

The term "GCV" refers to antiviral drug Ganciclovir.

The term "CDV" refers to antiviral drug Cidofovir.

The term "PFA" refers to antiviral drug Foscarnet.

The term "binding domain" refers to a conserved region in herpesvirus DNA polymerases. The herpesvirus DNA polymerases have seven (7) conserved regions. The binding domain is within the thrid conserved region (see Figure 2). When the binding domain contacts with an inhibitor, at least one amino acid in the binding domain mutates and provides the resistance. In general, the binding domain is at an amino acid sequence position 818-829 of the HSV-1 DNA polymerase or the homologous region in other herpes virus DNA polymerases (see Figure 2).

The term "a binding domain mutant herpes virus" refers to a herpes virus containing a binding domain mutation.

More specifically, the binding domain in HSV-1 strains, KOS, F, DJL and Patton are at amino acid sequence position 823. The binding domain in HSV-2 MS-M1 strain is at amino acid sequence position 826. The binding domain in HSV-2 186 strain is at amino acid sequence position 828. The binding domain in HCMV AD 169 strains is at amino acid sequence position 823-824.

The term "XxxxY" refers to an amino acid sequence position xxx, a single amino acid X in wild type is changed to an amino acid Y.

For example, the term "V823A" refers to an amino acid sequence position 823, a Valine found in wild type is changed to alanine in mutant strain.

The term "V824L" refers to an amino acid sequence position 824, a Valine found in wild type is changed to Leucine in mutant strain.

The term "V826A" refers to an amino acid sequence position 826, a Valine found in wild type is change to alanine in mutant strain.

The term "V828A" refers to an amino acid sequence position 828, a Valine found in wild type is change to alanine in mutant strain.

A table of amino acids and their representative abbreviations, symbols and codons is set forth below in the following Table.

Amino acid	Abbrev.	Symbol	Codon(s)					
Alanine	Ala	A	GCA	GCC	GCG	GCU		
Cysteine	Cys	C	UGC	UGU				
Aspartic acid	Asp	D	GAC	GAU				
Glutamic acid	Glu	E	GAA	GAG				
Phenylalanine	Phe	F	UUC	UUU				
Glycine	Gly	G	GGA	GGC	GGG	GGU		
Histidine	His	H	CAC	CAU				
Isoleucine	Ile	I	AUA	AUC	AUU			
Lysine	Lys	K	AAA	AAG				
Leucine	Leu	L	UUA	UUG	CUA	CUC	CUG	CUU
Methionine	Met	M	AUG					
Asparagine	Asn	N	AAC	AAU				
Proline	Pro	P	CCA	CCC	CCG	CCU		
Glutamine	Gln	Q	CAA	CAG				
Arginine	Arg	R	AGA	AGG	CGA	CGC	CGG	CGU
Serine	Ser	S	AGC	AGU	UCA	UCC	UCG	UCU
Threonine	Thr	T	ACA	ACC	ACG	ACU		
Valine	Val	V	GUA	GUC	GUG	GUU		
Tryptophan	Trp	W	UGG					
Tyrosine	Tyr	Y	UAC	UAU				

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cell and Viruses

African green monkey kidney cells (Vero) and human foreskin fibroblast cells (HFF) and herpes viruses can be obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC). Media is defined as Dulbecco's modified Eagle media (DMEM) containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and supplemented with antibiotics. Cells are maintained in media at 37°C in a

humidified atmosphere of 5% CO^2. HSV-1 strains F, Patton and DJL, HSV-2 strains MS, 35D and 186, and HCMV strain AD169 are used in these studies. Strain DJL is a clinical isolate of HSV-1 isolated in our lab from a primary oral lesion.

Measuring IC_{50} of a Compound of Interest That Inhibits Herpes Viruses

Preparation of Virus Stocks: HSV-1 and HSV-2 stocks are grown in Vero cells. HCMV stocks are grown in HFF cells. Approximately 1 ml of media containing sufficient virus to infect approximately 0.1% to 1% of the cells (multiplicity of infection of 0.001 to 0.01 PFU/cell) is added to a T-150 cell culture flask containing a confluent monolayer of cells. The cells are incubated at 37°C for approximately 1 hour. Approximately 50 ml of media is then added to the flask and the cells are incubated at 37°C until viral cytopathic effect (cpe) is apparent in 100% of the cells. The flask is then placed at –80°C for at least 30 min. The flask containing frozen media and cells is placed in a 37°C water bath until the media is thawed. This process disrupts the cells and releases virus into the media. 1 ml aliquots of media containing virus are dispensed into tubes and stored at –80°C. These aliquots of media containing virus are referred to as virus stocks.

Titrating Virus Stocks: Aliquots of virus are thawed at 37°C and serially diluted (10 fold dilutions) in media. 0.1 ml of each dilution of virus is placed in a single well of 24-well cell culture dish containing a confluent monolayer of cells (Vero cells for HSV-1 and HSV-2, HFF cells for HCMV) and incubated at 37°C for 1 h. The virus innoculum is then removed and 1 ml of media containing 0.8% carboxymethylcellulose (CMC) is added to each well of the dish. The dish is incubated at 37°C for approximately 2-3 days (HSV-1 and HSV-2) or 6-9 days (HCMV) to allow sufficient growth of virus to form plaques in the cell monolayer. Plaques can be observed and counted microscopically or by staining the cells with 0.1% crystal violet in 20% ethanol. The virus titer which is expressed as plaque forming units (PFU) per ml is obtained by counting the plaques in a well and correcting for the dilution of the viral innoculum.

Plaque Reduction Assays: Antiviral activity of compounds against herpesviruses such as HSV-1, HSV-2, or HCMV can be measured using plaque reduction assays. 0.1 ml of media containing approximately 50 PFU of virus is added to each well of a 24-well cell culture dish containing a confluent monolayer of cells (Vero cells for HSV-1 and HSV-2, HFF cells for HCMV). Compounds are dissolved in 100% DMSO and diluted in 100% DMSO as 200x stocks of the desired final drug concentration. Typically 5-6 two-fold dilutions are prepared

for each compound. Dilutions of compounds are then added to media containing 0.8% CMC resulting in a final 1x drug concentration. After the virus-infected cells have incubated for 1 h at 37°C, the virus innoculum is removed and 1 ml of media containing 0.8% CMC and the various concentrations of compound is added to each well of the dish. The dish is incubated at 37°C for approximately 2-3 days (HSV-1 and HSV-2) or 6-9 days (HCMV) to allow sufficient growth of virus to form plaques in the cell monolayer. Plaques can be observed and counted microscopically or by staining the cells with 0.1% crystal violet in 20% ethanol. Virus inhibition is determined for each drug concentration by comparing the number of plaques in drug-containing wells to control wells that did not contain drug. Antiviral activity of a compound is expressed as the concentration of compound predicted to reduce the number of plaques in a well by 50% (IC_{50}). The IC_{50} values are calculated by plotting the per cent inhibition vs. concentration of compound using EXCEL software for linear regression.

Selection of 4-oxo-DHQ resistant HSV-1 and HSV-2

Vero cells are plated out at a density of $3.5x10^5$ cells per well in a six well tissue culture plate. Cells are infected with HSV-1 KOS at a multiplicity of infection (moi) of 0.1 pfu/cell and 1 h post infection the cells are overlayed with 3 ml media containing 20 uM of a 4-oxo-DHQ. Cultures are incubated for 20 h at 37°C, freeze/thawed to release cell-associated virus, and 0.1 ml of culture is used to infect a new monolayer of Vero cells (one passage). Serial passage is repeated seven times in the presence of 20 uM drug. Virus isolates are then plaque purified three times prior to preparation of stocks. Virus recovered from each passage in the presence of compound No. 17 is shown in **Figure 3**. 4-oxo-DHQ resistant HSV-1 and HSV-2 may also be selected by the marker transfer method described below using wild-type HSV DNA and the corresponding mutant HSV polymerase gene.

Marker Transfer of a HCMV Mutation

A plasmid containing the wild-type HCMV polymerase gene is modified to contain the V823A or V823A and V824L mutations using a site-directed mutagenesis Kit (Stratagene Corp.) and following the manufactures's protocol. HFF cells are plated into T25 tissue culture flasks to achieve 80% confluency at the time of the transfection. Wild type HCMV AD169 DNA and plasmid DNA containing the mutant HCMV polymerase gene are mixed at a ratio of 1:2 (2ug of viral DNA to 4 ug of plasmid DNA). DNA's are

transfected using superfect transfection reagent according to methods recommended by the manufacturer (Quiagen Inc.). Cells are harvested five days posttransfection, freeze-thawed to release virus and half of the sample is used to infect HFF cell monolayers. Cells are overlayed with media containing 20 uM 4-oxo-DHQ compound **2** (see Figure 1). Serial passage is repeated seven times in the presence of 20 uM compound **2** and virus isolates are then plaque purified three times prior to preparation of viral stock.

Isolation of HSV and HCMV viral DNA

HSV DNA is purified from the cytoplasm of infected Vero cells. Vero cells (50 % confluent) are infected at an multiplicity of 0.01 PFU/cell. At 3-5 days postinfection infected cells (100% cpe) are harvested by centrifugation at 1000 rpm in a Beckman GS-6R centrifuge. The pelleted cells are resuspended in TE buffer and placed on ice for 15 minutes. NP-40 is then added to a final concentration of 0.2% and incubated on ice for a further 15 minutes. The cells are centrifuged at 2000 rpm for 10 minutes in a Beckman GS-6R centrifuge. The supernatant is removed and EDTA is added to a final concentration of 20 mM followed by the addition of SDS to a final concentration of 0.3% and proteinase K to a concentration of 50 ug/ml then incubated at 45C for 2 hours. HCMV DNA is isolated by infecting HFF cells (25% confluency) with HCMV at an multiplicity of 0.1 PFU/cell. Cells and media are harvested 5-7 days postinfection (100% cpe) and subjected to low speed centrifugation to remove intact cells and cell debris followed by a high speed spin to pellet virus particles (2500 rpm's in a Beckman SW28 rotor for 1 hour). Following incubation of the HSV and HCMV samples, 1.5 volumes of saturated NaI is added to the digested extract and the refractive index is adjusted to 1.434 –1.435. Ethidium bromide is added to a final concentration of 50 ug/ml. The samples are loaded into a VTI 50centrifuge tube and spun for 24 hours at 45,000 rpm. The DNA band is harvested extracted three times with n-butanol, then dialyzed against TE buffer followed by a dialysis against 95% ethanol and a final dialysis against TE buffer.

DNA Sequencing

HSV-1, HSV-2 or HCMV viral DNA's are sequenced directly using an ABI377 fluorescence sequencer (Perkin Elmer Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA) and the ABI BigDye PRISMTM dRhodamine Terminator Cycle Sequencing Ready Reaction Kit with AmpliTaq FSTM DNA polymerase (PE Applied Biosystems). Each cycle sequencing

reaction contained about 1.0 ug of purified viral DNA. Cycle-sequencing is performed using an initial denaturation at 98°C for 1 min, followed by 50 cycles: 98°C for 30 sec, annealing at 50°C for 30 sec, and extension at 60°C for 4 min. Temperature cycles and times are controlled by a Perkin-Elmer 9700 thermocycler. Extension products are purified using CentriflexTM gel filtration cartridges (Edge BioSystems, Gaithersburg, MD). Each reaction product is loaded by pipette onto the column, which is then centrifuged in a swinging bucket centrifuge (Sorvall model RT6000B table top centrifuge) at 750 x g for 1.5 min at room temperature. Column-purified samples are dried under vacuum for about 40 min and then dissolved in 4 ul of a DNA loading solution (83% deionized formamide, 8.3 mM EDTA, and 1.6 mg/ml Blue Dextran). The samples are then heated to 90°C for two min, and held at 4°C until loading. 1.5 ul of each sample is loaded into a single well of the ABI377 sequencer. Sequence chromatogram data files from the ABI377 are analyzed with the computer program Sequencher (Gene Codes, Ann Arbor, MI), for assembly of sequence fragments and correction of ambiguous base calls. Generally sequence reads of 600-700 bp are obtained. Potential sequencing errors are minimized by obtaining sequence information from both DNA strands and by re-sequencing difficult areas using primers at different locations until all sequencing ambiguities are removed.

The entire coding region of the polymerase genes from both the parent strains and the resistant viruses are sequenced. The DNA sequencing is done using viral DNA as the template thus avoiding cloning of the polymerase genes. The amino acid sequence of the DNA polymerases of HSV-1 KOS, F, Patton and DJL and HSV-2 MS and 186 are compared in **Figure 4**. Amino acids that are identical for the six polymerases are shaded in black while regions where amino acid differences are found are shaded in gray. The amino acid sequence of the four HSV-1 polymerases are essentially identical with only a few minor changes noted between the different HSV-1 strains. The majority of amino acid changes are found when the sequences of the HSV-1 and HSV-2 polymerases are compared.

Isolation and Characterization of HSV-1 and HSV-2 Mutants That Are Resistant To the 4-oxo-DHQ's and 4-oxo-DHTP Compounds

A panel of viruses consisting of four strains of HSV-1 (KOS, F, DJL, Patton) and three strains of HSV-2 (MS, 35D, 186) are tested in a plaque reduction assay against four different 4-oxo-DHQ compounds (# **1**, **2**, **4**, **5** as shown in Figure 1), and one 4-oxo-DHTP compound (# **3** as shown in Figure 1) and against Acyclovir. The six drugs inhibited

replication of the seven virus strains with IC_{50} values ranging from 2-10 μM (Table 1). In order to select for 4-oxo-DHQ resistant mutants, HSV-1 strains KOS, F, and DJL along with HSV-2 strains 186 and MS are serially passaged in the presence of 20 uM compound **1**. Following the seventh passage, 4-oxo-DHQ resistant virus from each strain are plaque purified three times and high-titer stocks are made. All of the resistant HSV mutants grew to high titers in Vero cells, indicating that the mutations in the resistant isolates did not significantly impair their growth. The mutants selected with 4-oxo-DHQ compound **1** exhibited >10 fold increase in IC_{50} when tested in a plaque reduction assay against 4-oxo-DHQ compound **1** Data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

4-oxo-DHQ Resistant Virus of HSV-1 and HSV-2

Virus Mutants	Compound 1 IC_{50} (uM)	Amino Acid Change in HSV DNA Polymerase
HSV-1 Kos-M1	>20	- V823A
HSV-1 F-M1	>20	- V823A
HSV-1 DJL-M1	>20	-V823A
HSV-2 MS-M1	>20	- V826A
HSV-2 186-M1	>20	- V828A

*HSV-1 and HSV-2 isolates grown in the presence of 4-oxo-DHQ select for resistant virus.

DNA sequence analysis of the 4-oxo-DHQ resistant mutants (HSV-1 KOS-M1, HSV-1 F-M1, HSV-1 DJL-M1, HSV-2 186-M1, HSV-2 MS-M1) demonstrated that all five mutants contained a single point mutation of T to C at the binding domain resulting in a Valine to Alanine amino acid change.

Isolation and Characterization of A HCMV Mutant That Is Resistant to The 4-oxo-DHQ's and 4-oxo-DHTP Compounds

In order to select for a 4-oxo-DHQ HCMV resistant mutant, virus (strain AD169) is serially passaged in the presence of 20 uM a 4-oxo-DHQ. Although we could readily select for HSV mutants using this procedure we failed to isolate an HCMV mutant, even when the virus is passaged at low drug concentrations (<5 uM). Comparison of the amino acid sequence of the HSV polymerase, Y-G-F-T-G-V-Q-H-G, and HCMV polymerase, Y-G-F-T-G-V-V-N-G, in the region of amino acid 823 (underlined amino acid) showed that there is a second valine at position 824 in the HCMV polymerase. In order to determine if both valines need to be changed in order to confer resistance to the 4-oxo-DHQ's, *in vitro*

polymerase assays are done using mutant HCMV polymerases containing either V823A or V823A plus V824L (Table 3).

Table 3

HCMV Mutant Polymerase Exhibits Resistance to 4-oxo-DHQ*

Polymerase	Compound 1 IC_{50} (uM)
HCMV (wild)	4.6
HCMV V823A	17.2
HCMV V823A/V824L	42.9

*Generation of the valine to alanine at amino acid 823 of HCMV results in a 3.5-fold increase in resistance.

*Mutation of the amino acid from valine to alanine and amino acid 824 from valine to leucine results in an 9-fold increase in resistance, relative to wild type.

The V823A alone resulted in a 3.5-fold increase in the IC_{50} while the polymerase with the double amino acid change had nearly 10-fold increase in the IC_{50}. In order to isolate an HCMV resistant mutant marker rescue experiments are done. Plasmids containing the mutant polymerase genes are transfected into HFF cells along with wild type HCMV AD169 DNA. The resulting virus is then serially passaged in the presence of 20 uM compound **1** (see figure 1). A 4-oxo-DHQ resistant virus is isolated from marker rescue studies done with the HCMV polymerase gene containing mutations that result in the V823A, V824L amino acid changes, but not with the gene containing V823A change alone. The mutant selected with compound **1** (HCMV AD169-M1) exhibited ~7-fold increase in IC_{50} when tested in a plaque reduction assay compared to Ganciclovir and cidofovir which has a ≤ 2-fold change in sensitivity (Table 4).

Table 4

Plaque reduction assay of 4-oxo-DHQ resistant HCMV*

Drug	HCMV AD169 IC_{50} (μM)	HCMV AD169 – M1 IC_{50} (μM)
Compound 1	0.7	4.7
Ganciclovir	0.9	1.0
Cidofovir	0.3	0.6

*Recombination of wild-type HCMV with a polymerase gene containing the valine to alanine at amino acid 823 and the valine to leucine at amino acid 824 allowed for selection of resistant virus with about 7-fold less sensitivity to compound 1.

*Sensitivity of resistant HCMV virus to Ganciclovir and Cidofovir verifies that the 4-oxo-DHQ's mechanism for inhibiting the polymerase protein is unique

The entire coding region of the HCMV polymerase genes from both the parent strain and the resistant virus are sequenced. The DNA sequencing is again done using viral DNA as the template thus avoiding cloning of the polymerase genes. Comparison of the DNA sequence of the two polymerase genes demonstrated that the resistant mutant contained two point mutations that resulted in the predicted V823A, V824L amino acid changes. As with the HSV resistant viruses these results demonstrate the critical role of the region encompassing amino acid 823 for inhibition of polymerase activity by these compounds.

Antiviral Activity of Nucleoside and Non-Nucleoside Polymerase Inhibitors Against 4-oxo-DHQ Resistant Mutants

In order to determine if the 4-HQ binding domain mutations alter the sensitivity of the HSV-1, HSV-2 and HCMV mutants to both non-nucleoside (4-oxo-DHQ's) and nucleoside inhibitors (e.g Acyclovir and ganciclovir) several of the mutants are tested in plaque reduction assays against a series of non-nucleoside compounds including Foscarnet (PFA), 4-HQ's 4-oxo-DHQ's and 4-oxo-DHTP's (Table 5). The mutants are also tested against a series of nucleoside inhibitors including acyclovir and ganciclovir (Table 5). The activity of these compounds against the mutants is compared to their activity against the wild type strains that are used to isolate the HSV and HCMV mutants. When tested against a number of 4-HQ's, 4-oxo-DHQ's and 4-oxo-DHTP's and other related classes of compounds all of the drugs are found to inhibit the wild type virus with IC_{50} values ranging from <0.1 uM to 30 uM. When these drugs are tested against the resistant viruses they are found to have IC_{50} values 5 to 10 fold higher then the parent virus. There is little if any difference in the IC_{50} values of the nucleoside compounds and the non-nucleoside PFA between the wild type and mutant HSV-1, HSV-2, and HCMV viruses. These results demonstrate that the amino acid change in the binding domain (V823A in the HSV-1 polymerase, V826A in the HSV2-MS polymerase, V828A in the HSV2-186 polymerase, and the V823A/V824L changes in the HCMV polymerase) resulted in resistance to the 4-oxo-DHQ's and 4-oxo-DHTP's, which provides further evidence that these classes of compounds share an affinity for a region we refer to as the binding domain. In contrast, these amino acid changes did not alter the activity of these viruses to other classes of polymerase inhibitors.

Table 5

Antiviral activity of nucleoside and non-nucleoside polymerase inhibitors against HSV-1, HSV-2, and HCMV Isolates selected for 4-oxo-DHQ resistance*

	Plaque Reduction Assay – IC_{50} (μM)					
Drug	**HSV-2 MS**	**HSV-2 MS-M1**	**HSV-1 KOS**	**HSV-1 KOS-M1**	**HCMV AD169**	**HCMV AD169-M1**
6	28.8	>50	24.6	>50	5.1	>16
7	8.8	27.9	6.5	>50	0.3	3.4
8	2.3	>50	5.1	>50	<0.1	1.1
9	0.9	48.7	1.9	>50	<0.1	3.1
10	29.2	>50	15.8	>50	1.1	>16
11	3.0	>50	3.1	>50	0.7	3.9
12	0.4	12.5	1.3	>50	0.2	1.1
13	5.3	>50	5.5	<25	2.7	>16
14	1.6	>50	28.4	>50	0.9	18.4
2	1.3	>50	3.3	>50	0.4	4.0
4	2.1	28.4	4.2	>50	0.6	2.1
3	0.8	>50	4.0	>50	1.5	6.2
15	5.9	>50	>50	>50	0.7	7.7
Iudr	5.0	6.1	1.1	0.8	ND	ND
Bvdu	5.8	5.9	2.1	0.1	ND	ND
ACV	2.4	2.8	3.9	4.4	ND	ND
AraC	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	ND	ND
AraT	6.6	3.6	11.6	3.6	ND	ND
AraA	10.6	18.2	26.1	27.2	ND	ND
GCVir	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.8	0.8
CDV	ND	ND	ND	ND	0.4	0.3
PFA	ND	ND	ND	ND	38	<20

*HSV-2 MS, HSV-1 KOS, HCMV AD169: wild type strains
*HSV-2 MS-M1, HSV-1 KOS-M1, HCMV AD169-M1: mutants selected for 4-oxo-DHQ resistance
*ND – Not Done.

Antiviral compounds identified by the present invention can conveniently be administered in a pharmaceutical composition containing the compound in combination with a suitable excipient, the composition being useful in combating viral infections. Pharmaceutical compositions containing a compound appropriate for antiviral use are prepared by methods and contain excipients which are well known in the art. A generally recognized compendium of such methods and ingredients is Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences by E.W. Martin (Mark Publ. Co., 15th Ed., 1975).

Antiviral compounds identified by the present invention and their compositions can be administered parenterally (for example, by intravenous, intraperitoneal or intramuscular

injection), topically, orally, or rectally, depending on whether the preparation is used to treat internal or external viral infections.

For oral therapeutic administration, the active compound may be combined with one or more excipients and used in the form of ingestible tablets, buccal tablets, troches, capsules, elixirs, suspensions, syrups, wafers, and the like. Such compositions and preparations should contain at least 0.1% of active compound. The percentage of the compositions and preparations may, of course, be varied and may conveniently be between about 2 to about 60% of the weight of a given unit dosage form. The amount of active compound in such therapeutically useful compositions is such that an effective dosage level will be obtained.

The tablets, troches, pills, capsules, and the like may also contain the following: binders such as gum tragacanth, acacia, corn starch or gelatin; excipients such as dicalcium phosphate; a disintegrating agent such as corn starch, potato starch, alginic acid and the like; a lubricant such as magnesium stearate; and a sweetening agent such as sucrose, fructose, lactose or aspartame or a flavoring agent such as peppermint, oil of wintergreen, or cherry flavoring may be added. When the unit dosage form is a capsule, it may contain, in addition to materials of the above type, a liquid carrier, such as a vegetable oil or a polyethylene glycol. Various other materials may be present as coatings or to otherwise modify the physical form of the solid unit dosage form. For instance, tablets, pills, or capsules may be coated with gelatin, wax, shellac or sugar and the like. A syrup or elixir may contain the active compound, sucrose or fructose as a sweetening agent, methyl and propylparabens as preservatives, a dye and flavoring such as cherry or orange flavor. Of course, any material used in preparing any unit dosage form should be pharmaceutically acceptable and substantially non-toxic in the amounts employed. In addition, the active compound may be incorporated into sustained-release preparations and devices.

Antiviral compounds identified by the present invention and their compositions can also be administered intravenously or intraperitoneally by infusion or injection. Solutions of the active compound or its salts can be prepared in water, optionally mixed with a nontoxic surfactant. Dispersions can also be prepared in glycerol, liquid polyethylene glycols, triacetin, and mixtures thereof and in oils. Under ordinary conditions of storage and use, these preparations contain a preservative to prevent the growth of microorganisms.

Pharmaceutical dosage forms suitable for injection or infusion can include sterile aqueous solutions or dispersions or sterile powders comprising the active ingredient which

are adapted for the extemporaneous preparation of sterile injectable or infusible solutions or dispersions, optionally encapsulated in liposomes. In all cases, the ultimate dosage form should be sterile, fluid and stable under the conditions of manufacture and storage. The liquid carrier or vehicle can be a solvent or liquid dispersion medium comprising, for example, water, ethanol, a polyol (for example, glycerol, propylene glycol, liquid polyethylene glycols, and the like), vegetable oils, nontoxic glyceryl esters, and suitable mixtures thereof. The proper fluidity can be maintained, for example, by the formation of liposomes, by the maintenance of the required particle size in the case of dispersions or by the use of surfactants. The prevention of the action of microorganisms can be brought about by various antibacterial and antifungal agents, for example, parabens, chlorobutanol, phenol, sorbic acid, thimerosal, and the like. In many cases, it will be preferable to include isotonic agents, for example, sugars, buffers or sodium chloride. Prolonged absorption of the injectable compositions can be brought about by the use in the compositions of agents delaying absorption, for example, aluminum monostearate and gelatin.

Sterile injectable solutions can be prepared by incorporating the active compound in the required amount in the appropriate solvent with various of the other ingredients enumerated above, as required, followed by filter sterilization. In the case of sterile powders for the preparation of sterile injectable solutions, the preferred methods of preparation are vacuum drying and the freeze drying techniques, which yield a powder of the active ingredient plus any additional desired ingredient present in the previously sterile-filtered solutions.

For topical administration, the present compounds may be applied in pure form, i.e., when they are liquids. However, it will generally be desirable to administer them to the skin as compositions or formulations, in combination with a dermatologically acceptable carrier, which may be a solid or a liquid.

Useful solid carriers include finely divided solids such as talc, clay, microcrystalline cellulose, silica, alumina and the like. Useful liquid carriers include water, alcohols or glycols or water-alcohol/glycol blends, in which the present compounds can be dissolved or dispersed at effective levels, optionally with the aid of non-toxic surfactants. Adjuvants such as fragrances and additional antimicrobial agents can be added to optimize the properties for a given use. The resultant liquid compositions can be applied from absorbent pads, used to impregnate bandages and other dressings, or sprayed onto the affected area using pump-type or aerosol sprayers. Thickeners such as synthetic polymers, fatty acids, fatty acid salts and

esters, fatty alcohols, modified celluloses or modified mineral materials can also be employed with liquid carriers to form spreadable pastes, gels, ointments, soaps, and the like, for application directly to the skin of the user.

Examples of useful dermatological compositions which can be used to deliver the compounds of formula I to the skin are known to the art; for example, see Jacquet et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,608,392), Geria (U.S. Pat. No. 4,992,478), Smith et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,559,157) and Wortzman (U.S. Pat. No. 4,820,508).

Useful dosages of the compounds of formula I can be determined by comparing their *in vitro* activity, and *in vivo* activity in animal models. Methods for the extrapolation of effective dosages in mice, and other animals, to humans are known to the art; for example, see U.S. Pat. No. 4,938,949.

The compound is conveniently administered in unit dosage form; for example, containing 5 to 1000 mg, conveniently 10 to 750 mg, most conveniently, 50 to 500 mg of active ingredient per unit dosage form. The desired dose may conveniently be presented in a single dose or as divided doses administered at appropriate intervals, for example, as two, three, four or more sub-doses per day. The sub-dose itself may be further divided, e.g., into a number of discrete loosely spaced administrations; such as multiple inhalations from an insufflator or by application of a plurality of drops into the eye.

For internal infections, the compositions can be administered orally or parenterally at dose levels, calculated as the free base, of about 0.1 to 300 mg/kg, preferably 1.0 to 30 mg/kg of mammal body weight, and can be used in man in a unit dosage form, administered one to four times daily in the amount of 1 to 1000 mg per unit dose.

For parenteral administration or for administration as drops, as for eye infections, the compounds are presented in aqueous solution in a concentration of from about 0.1 to about 10%, more preferably about 0.1 to about 7%. The solution may contain other ingredients, such as emulsifiers, antioxidants or buffers.

Generally, the concentration of the compound(s) of formula I in a liquid composition, such as a lotion, will be from about 0.1-25 wt-%, preferably from about 0.5-10 wt-%. The concentration in a semi-solid or solid composition such as a gel or a powder will be about 0.1-5 wt-%, preferably about 0.5-2.5 wt-%.

The exact regimen for administration of the compounds and compositions disclosed herein will necessarily be dependent upon the needs of the individual subject being treated, the type of treatment and, of course, the judgment of the attending practitioner.

The antiviral activity of a compound of the invention can be determined using pharmacological models which are well known to the art, or using Test A described below.

The compounds of formula (I) and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof are useful as antiviral agents. Thus, they are useful to combat viral infections in animals, including man. The compounds are generally active against herpes viruses, and are particularly useful against the varicella zoster virus, the Epstein-Barr virus, the herpes simplex virus, the human herpes virus type 8 (HHV-8) and the cytomegalovirus (CMV).